and relatives of an older generation.

Females generally were subordinate to males as well as to elders. The wife was subject to the will of her husband and to that of her son when he became head of the house. While a man's parents lived, his wife was expected to be more subservient than he toward his parents. In his mother-in-law, the son's wife more often than not encountered a tyrant. The mother-in-law, rather than her son, governed and judged the actions of the son's wife.

B. Social Role

The principal social function of the family in China was the bearing, rearing, and training of children. Sons were more highly valued than daughters, because only the former remained with the family after marriage, contributing to its labor and income, and only sons could perpetuate the family and perform the yearly rites in honor of the father and the family ancestors after the father's death. Implicit in the ceremony was the idea that the ancestors had a life after death, watched over the family's fortune, and were comforted by the periodic ministrations of the family. For the living, the rites provided an occasion for awe and respect during which the continuity of the family over time was re-emphasized and the solidarity and duties of the family unit in the present reasserted.

The veneration of ancestors was so important to Chinese society that the absence of sons to

carry on the yearly observances was regarded as a major failure on the responsible male's part and a tremendous catastrophe for the family. Concubinage and adoption were socially and legally sanctioned as means of providing sons, if marriage produced only daughters or no children at all. Because of the necessity of providing against a high death rate, the premium on sons resulted in over-population, only partly offset by a high rate of female infanticide.

Just as sex, age, and generation determined an individual's status within the family, so did these factors determine his behavior and position in the community and the world at large. An additional determinant of his standing was the status of his family in society.

Authority and dominance were the province of males. Women might, and occasionally did, exercise overt leadership. More frequently, they were the power behind the throne. Such cases were exceptional, however; in modern times at least, supremacy was neither desired by women nor readily admitted to when possessed.

Age was honored relatively ely. Long life automatically gave its possessor higher standing in the community, but whatever age he attained, he was to show respect to his elders and members of an older generation. In the society of traditional China, age implied the accumulation of wisdom and experience vital to society in times of decision or crisis.